

An Examination of Generational Stereotypes as a Path Towards Reverse Ageism

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This article develops and tests an argument about the origins and consequences of reverse ageism. Specifically, we argue that the hype about generational differences gives credence to reverse-ageist ideologies, and we test the notion that such ideologies engender reverse-ageist discriminatory behaviors directed at young nonprofit professionals. We surveyed 282 Millennials, Xers, and Boomers employed in the nonprofit and human services sector. Participants completed a Generational Stereotypes Index, rated the work skills of young professionals, and shared examples of reverse age discrimination. Compared with Millennials, members of prior generations (Boomers and Xers) view “the typical young professional” more stereotypically. Moreover, these stereotypical perceptions of young professionals predict older employees’ beliefs that young professionals lack general work skills. Qualitative analyses show that a majority of older employees (over 60% in our sample) describe their young colleagues negatively, and that young employees (close to 30% in our sample) experience reverse age discrimination. These results illustrate how the seemingly benign conversa-

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tion about generational differences escalates into a serious issue—reverse age discrimination experienced by today’s young employees, the Millennials.

Keywords: generational differences, generational stereotyping, reverse ageism, reverse age discrimination

There is a portrait of youth that is not only misleading, but harmful. We ought to correct the record out of a sense of fairness, as well as accuracy. These young people desperately need a chance to get started in responsible careers. Instead, they are frequently saddled with the image of being uninterested and unwilling to assume responsibility. Complaining about youth is all too common.

(The William T. Grant Foundation, 1988)

Negative attitudes and discrimination against older adults (ageism) are an unfortunate phenomenon observed around the globe (Ayalon, 2013). Older adults are often described as forgetful, inactive, and old fashioned, which results either in overly positive treatment, such as patronizing behaviors directed at older individuals, or in negative treatment, such as workplace discrimination (Kite, Stockdale, Whitley, & Johnson, 2005; North & Fiske, 2012). To protect older employees, laws such as *The Age Discrimination in Employment Act* in the U.S. prohibit employment discrimination against people aged 40 years or older. This nearly exclusive focus on older adults as the subjects of ageism has paradoxically resulted in what some have called ageist ageism (Rodham, 2001), as little attention has been paid to stereotypes and discrimination that younger adults face in the workplace because of their (young) age.

Yet, ageism directed at young employees—referred to as reverse ageism or adultism—is a phenomenon documented by a growing body of research. First, young employees are often the subjects of reverse-ageist ideologies. For example, consistent with traditional beliefs that older individuals are keepers of societal and religious values, and that they are wiser and better tested, young employees are viewed less favorably in general (Ayalon, 2013), as well as in terms of important work-related attributes, such as leadership ability (Collins, Hair, & Rocco, 2009) and accountability (Holt, Marques, & Way, 2012). Second, and contrary to popular belief, young employees experience age discrimination at levels that are as high as, or even higher than, those reported by old employees (Kennedy & Hines, 2007; Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999; Marchiondo, Gonzales, & Ran, 2016; Snape & Redman, 2003). Supported by such findings, the general claim of the reverse ageism literature is that young employees—broadly defined as people in their 20’s and early 30’s—comprise a socially disadvantaged group that is likely to be exposed to workplace discrimination stemming from reverse-ageist ideologies (Kessler et al., 1999). The purpose of this article is to contribute to the developing literature on reverse ageism by exploring a possible pathway toward reverse ageism that today’s young employees, the Millennials, face.

To understand why today's young adults experience reverse ageism in the workplace, we link the concept of reverse-ageist ideology to that of generational stereotypes. According to the literature on generational differences, four generations are currently represented in the workforce—the Traditionalists, the Baby Boomers, the Generation Xers, and the Generation Yers or Millennials¹ (e.g., Twenge, 2010). Traditionalists and Boomers are described as high on work centrality and work ethics, Xers are thought to be motivated by money and other extrinsic rewards, and Yers are seen as placing greatest value on leisure. Although much research has challenged the validity of such claims about generational differences (e.g., Costanza, Badger, Fraser, Severt, & Gade, 2012; DeMeuse & Mlodzik, 2010; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Parry & Urwin, 2011; Sackett, 2002), the public has largely embraced the notion that the generations are different. For example, Google returns 2,850,000 hits for *generational differences*, Amazon lists over 6,000 books with *generational differences* in the title, and EBSCO finds 30,000 trade journal articles on the topic. We argue that the preponderance of claims about the existence of generational differences, and the mostly negative characterizations of the current new generation—the Millennials, fuel preexisting reverse-ageist ideologies and set the stage for discriminatory behaviors directed at young employees.

Our argument is visually captured in Figure 1, and can be summarized as follows: Casually maligning the youth goes back millennia—opinions shared as far back as the 8th century B.C., or as recently as the year 2016, betray this bias.² However, whereas stereotyping the new generation is nothing new, interest in the notion of generational differences dates back only several decades, to Strauss and

¹ See Costanza et al. (2012) for a comprehensive summary of start-end years for each generation. As noted in Costanza et al.'s (2012) review, there are no agreed upon start and end cut-offs for the various generations.

² The 8th century B.C. Greek poet Hesiod mused:

I see no hope for the future of our people if they are dependent on the frivolous youth of today. When I was young, we were taught to be discreet and respectful of elders, but the present youth are exceedingly disrespectful and impatient.

The 21st century Oscar winning actor Michael Caine opined:

These days they [the new generation] just say 'I'm going to be an actor because I want to be rich and famous. And then they do a little part on television and everyone knows who they are. They can't really act.

He continued "I knew I wasn't going to be rich, I knew I wasn't going to be famous, I knew I wasn't going to be a movie star, I just wanted to be a good actor, that's all" (Bruculieri, 2016).

An anonymous reviewer pointed yet a third example—this one, from a movie titled *Bye Birdie*. In it, the father sings: "Kids! What's the matter with kids today? Why can't they be like we were, perfect in every way?" We agree with the reviewer's comment that this is a common lament every generation hears from their parents. This is exactly consistent with our statement that adults hold preexisting reverse-ageist ideologies, often without consciously realizing it.

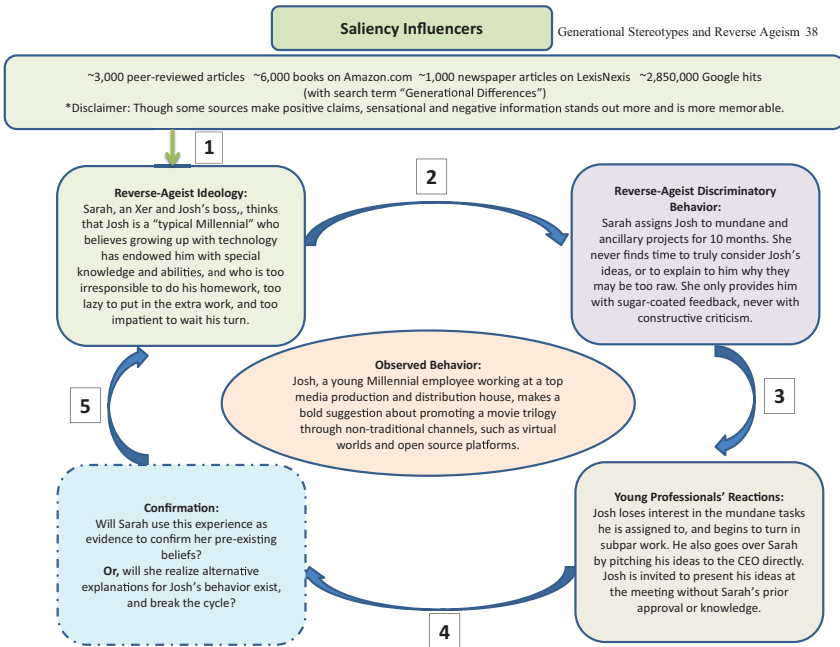


Figure 1. Visual depiction of our central argument: The saliency of generational stereotypes increases the likelihood that older employees would rely on reverse-ageist ideologies to explain younger employees' workplace behaviors (Link 1). In turn, such ideologies lead older employees to engage in reverse-ageist discriminatory behaviors at work (Link 2), possibly begetting a harmful self-fulfilling cycle (Links 3, 4, and 5). Note that the illustrative examples in the graph are based on a Harvard Business Review case, *Gen Y in the Workforce*, available at <https://hbr.org/2009/02/gen-y-in-the-workforce-2>. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

Howe's (1991) oft-cited book *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*. Unfortunately, the vast literature on generational differences that has emerged since then has tended to paint today's new generation—the Millennials—as overprivileged trophy kids with oversized egos who expect constant praise, but who are good with technology. Because adults—as history teaches us—have a propensity to entertain reverse-ageist ideologies, and because at the same time the generational differences literature provides validation of claims about generational differences, stereotypes about the young become not only socially acceptable, but also legitimate. As such, they inform individuals' decisions and actions, and ultimately lead older employees to create negative experiences at the workplace for their young colleagues.

We test our argument in a large sample of nonprofit sector professionals. We first show that older employees have indeed adopted many of the popular generational stereotypes about the Millennial generation. We then show that

older employees' generational stereotypes about today's young employees extend to more specific assumptions about the work skills of young employees. Finally, we capture the effects of reverse ageism through qualitative reports where young employees discuss how their experiences at work are impacted by common stereotypes about "the new generation."

What is Reverse Ageism and is it Real?

Lifespan expectancy increased dramatically in the late 20th century, leading to a corresponding increase in the number of older adults in the labor force. Concurrent with this development, [Butler and Lewis \(1973\)](#) introduced the term "ageism" to describe the process of systematic stereotyping and discrimination against people because they are old. As older adults stayed in the workforce in larger numbers, and as they occupied and remained in positions of higher power, a new form of ageism emerged—that directed at young adults. Hence, ageism's conceptualization was expanded to include any prejudice or discrimination against or in favor of any age group ([Palmore, 1990](#)). Ageism is comprised of two components—one, an ageist ideology of negative stereotypes, beliefs and attitudes, and two, age discrimination, or behaviors that exclude certain people and/or disadvantage them relative to others solely due to their age ([McMullin & Marshall, 2001](#)).

Ageist Ideology

In terms of the first component of ageism—ageist ideology—young employees are often the subject of reverse-ageist stereotypes. In a cross-cultural study spanning 28 European countries, [Ayalon \(2013\)](#) reported more negative views of young than of older employees. Similarly, in the U.S., [Finkelstein, Ryan, and King \(2013\)](#) found that only 48% of the stereotypes that older and middle-aged workers held of younger workers were positive; in contrast, 73% of the stereotypes that young and middle-aged workers held of older workers were positive, and 85% of the stereotypes that young and older workers held of middle-aged workers were positive. Further, [Collins, Hair, and Rocco \(2009\)](#) reported that older workers viewed their supervisors' leadership more unfavorably if the supervisors were young (in their 30's) versus if they were older (in their 50's); in contrast, young workers' expectations of their supervisors' leadership abilities did not vary as a function of the supervisors' age. Hence, although the vast majority of research on ageism has focused on ageist ideologies about older workers ([Finkelstein, King, & Voyles, 2015](#)), young workers are equally, if not more likely, to be subject to (reverse-)ageist ideologies.

Age Discrimination

In terms of the second component of ageism—age discrimination—research shows that young employees do report elevated levels of perceived age discrimination. [Snape and Redman \(2003\)](#) found that young United Kingdom employees (under 30 years of age) report the highest levels of perceived age discrimination, followed by employees in their 30's, whereas middle-aged (40's) and older employees (50's) report the lowest levels. The very same pattern of results—highest perceived age discrimination among the youngest employees—has been reported in the U.S. by [Kennedy and Hines \(2007\)](#), [Kessler, Mickelson, and Williams \(1999\)](#), and most recently, by [Marchiondo et al. \(2016\)](#).

While young employees' *perceptions* of age discrimination might not indicate the presence of *actual* discrimination, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that those aged 20–24 and 25–34 are more likely to be unemployed than all older age groups (8.35% and 5.00% vs. 3.61%, respectively; [BLS, 2016](#)).³ More importantly, this pattern has been true at least since the 1980s ([Deal, Altman, & Rogelberg, 2010](#)), suggesting that reverse age discrimination is real. The higher unemployment rate among young employees is likely *not* caused by their own work-related attitudes and behaviors. First, today's young adults put in as many hours at work as prior cohorts. For example, The Families and Work Institute (FWI) compared the number of paid and unpaid hours worked by individuals aged 18–22 in 2002 with the hours worked by individuals aged 18–22 in 1977, and found no differences ([FWI, 2005](#)). These results were more recently corroborated by another time-series study of hours worked ([Miller, 2011](#)). Second, today's young adults demonstrate a higher degree of involvement with the world of work than prior cohorts at that age. For example, the National Association of Colleges and Employers reported that participation in internships while in college has risen from less than 10% in the mid 1980s to over 80% in the mid 2000s ([Howe, 2014a](#)). A national survey of career development university officers—individuals who closely work with college students to help them identify career opportunities—revealed that 80% of them felt that professionalism among the young has remained the same or even increased ([Center for Professional Excellence \[CPE\], 2014](#)).

Third, no drops in job performance or productivity have been reported among young employees relative to middle-aged and older adults in the workforce. For example, meta-analyses have consistently revealed a near-zero association between age and performance ratings ($r = .03$, [McEvoy & Cascio, 1989](#); and $r = .01$, [Sturman, 2003](#)), as well as between age and

³ This is “seasonally adjusted” data, which controls for peaks and valleys in employment patterns throughout the year (such as college attendance, holidays, etc.).

productivity ($r = .07$, McEvoy & Cascio, 1989; and $r = .08$, Sturman, 2003). Finally, splitting with prior legal interpretations of the ADEA, the Sixth Circuit court allowed a reverse age discrimination case to proceed, recognizing that reverse age discrimination is a potentially valid theory of recovery under the ADEA (Cullen, 2003). Hence, young employees not only perceive elevated levels of discrimination when compared with middle-aged and even to older workers, but objective employment and performance data validate these perceptions, and the courts agree. This strongly suggests that the reverse-ageist ideologies older adults harbor about the young in general translate into reverse-ageist prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors at the workplace. We next turn to examining how the prevalence and social acceptability of generational stereotyping compound the very real problem of reverse ageism.

Linking Reverse Ageism to the Popularity of the Generational Differences Concept

Multigenerational theory, also known as generational cohort theory, is a loosely defined set of assumptions that have coalesced around the concept of “generation” credited to Mannheim (1952) and popularized by Strauss and Howe (1991) oft-cited book, *Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584 to 2069*. A “generation” is defined as a group of people born during a certain span of years whose shared worldview is grounded in social and historical events that have occurred during their formative development years. With respect to the four generations present in today’s workforce, the defining sociohistorical event that has given rise to the Traditionalists is assumed to be World War II, the defining event for the Boomers is the Cold War, that for the Xers is the financial and societal insecurity of the 60’s and 70’s, and for the Millennials, it is the advent of communications technology in the 90’s. Because of these events, members of each respective generation are assumed to share certain characteristics, beliefs, values, motivators, and management preferences (see Cugin, 2012, for a review).

While prior generations have been the subject of media and academic attention, no generation in history has been as studied and scrutinized as the Millennial generation (Howe, 2014b). Truthfully, not all sources paint the new generation in a negative light; however, the vast majority do, and negative information is more memorable than positive information (Arango-Kure, Garz, & Rott, 2014). Moreover, older adults are more likely to focus on messages that confirm preexisting, reverse-ageist notions about the young, especially when such messages appear scientific and justified. In effect, the availability of generally negative information about Millennials frees older employees to rely on reverse-ageist ideologies as explanatory mechanisms

for young professionals' behaviors, begetting a harmful self-fulfilling cycle that is difficult to break because it is perceived as legitimate.

To illustrate this argument (see Figure 1), we turn to a popular Harvard Business Review case, *Gen Y in the Workforce*.⁴ In the case, Josh, a young Millennial professional, makes a bold proposal for promoting a new movie trilogy. Josh's older supervisor, Sarah, herself an Xer, thinks: "Like so many of the young people hired by the studio recently, [. . .] Josh is far more concerned with *getting* praise than with *earning* praise. How else to explain that "look at me" move in the team meeting?" Sarah chooses a reverse-ageist internal attribution (Josh is a typical Millennial who acts opportunistically), while ignoring other plausible internal attributions (Josh is smart and driven), as well as plausible external attributions (Josh's behavior is consistent with today's egalitarian workplace).

Our general argument is that Sarah's explanation for Josh's behavior is greatly influenced by the generational differences literature. First, popular press articles such as TIME Magazine's, 2013 (Stein, 2013) cover story *The Me Generation: Millennials are Lazy, Entitled Narcissists Who Still Live with Their Parents*, TV shows such as *60 Minutes* (Hess, 2011; Safer, 2007; Tulgan, 2012) story on Millennials that claimed that a "new breed of American worker is about to attack everything you hold sacred," training seminars such as *Not Everyone Gets a Trophy* (MediaPartners.com), and TED Talks, such as Scott Hess's *Millennials: Who They Are and Why We Hate Them*, abound. Second, as Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) observed, many in the academic literature have built hypotheses around stereotypes. To verify this claim, we reviewed all of the academic articles in our literature search that offered directional hypotheses about generational differences. Indeed, supporting Myers and Sadaghiani's (2010) observation, we found that 70% expected worse results for the new generation. Specifically, Millennials were predicted to report lower levels of impulse control, work centrality, work ethics, altruism, authenticity, patience, commitment, satisfaction, and motivation, and higher levels of leisure, individualism, narcissism, pay and promotion expectations, entitlement, and turnover intentions, than older generations. In short, both popular and academic sources send powerful signals that make reverse-ageist attributions more salient, hence increasing the chances that older employees will choose such attributions when assessing younger colleagues' behaviors at work (Link 1 in Figure 1).

Research has begun to investigate the degree to which the public has embraced the characteristics frequently attributed to Millennials. Collins et al. (2009) showed that older employees have lower expectations of the leadership abilities of younger supervisors. Lester, Standifer, Schultz, and Windsor (2012)

⁴ Case available at <https://hbr.org/2009/02/gen-y-in-the-workforce-2>

found that Millennials were perceived as valuing 14 of 15 workplace values—such as professionalism, teamwork, continuous learning, and face-to-face communication—to a lower degree compared with their own reports of how much they valued these items. Finkelstein et al. (2013) reported that only 30% of the stereotypical traits middle-aged and older workers mentioned of younger workers were positive. Building on this work and consistent with our argument that the legitimization of claims of generational differences frees individuals to rely on reverse-ageist ideologies, we propose that:

Hypothesis 1: Older employees will be more likely to apply stereotypical descriptions of Millennials to judgments of “the typical young professional” than young employees.

From Reverse-Ageist Ideology to Reverse Age Discrimination

Interpersonal discrimination includes microaggression and creating negative workplace experiences for others by demonstrating prejudicial attitudes in daily social interactions (Roberts, Swanson, & Murphy, 2004).⁵ We argue that when reverse-ageist ideologies become salient due to the availability, popularity, and perceived accuracy of generational differences claims, discriminatory behaviors occur. For example, when older workers espouse reverse-ageist, generational stereotypes, such as believing that young workers are lazy and entitled, they are likelier to relegate young employees to basic office tasks and insignificant projects, rather than invest time in teaching and mentoring young colleagues. This is exactly the path Sarah chooses in the *Gen Y in the Workplace* case. She assigns Josh to ancillary tasks for over 10 months, and promises herself to “take time to explain to Josh exactly how his analysis had been received, how it fit into the overall presentation, and how she’d structured the pitch—after the meeting.” Assigning young employees to mundane tasks may not appear discriminatory, but in fact, the assignment of employees to tasks with few opportunities for skills acquisition or development is one of the best established outcomes of age discrimination (Green & Montgomery, 1998; Snape & Redman, 2003; see Link 2 in Figure 1).

Capturing data on denying young workers challenging job-related opportunities, or on pressuring young workers into roles they do not wish to engage in,

⁵ Note that “interpersonal discrimination” captures discriminatory behaviors at the micro level—people discriminating against other people. In contrast “institutional discrimination” captures discriminatory behaviors at the macro level—organizations or institutions discriminating against people. In this article, we are interested in “interpersonal” not in “institutional” discrimination.

is difficult because individuals are generally unwilling to admit that they have engaged in behaviors for which they could be punished (Lee, 2003) or socially judged (Heneman, Heneman, & Judge, 1997). Hence, to capture discriminatory behaviors in a more subtle way, we focused on assessments of young professionals' work skills. We reasoned that perceiving young professionals as lacking in workplace skills is a good proxy for engaging in discriminatory behaviors. For example, it is easy to imagine how a senior professional might exclude a young colleague from an important presentation, or how he or she might monitor and double-check a young professional's every report, when that senior professional believes young employees lack workplace skills. With the assumption that perceptions of gaps in work skills are a reasonable proxy for discriminatory behaviors, we propose that:

Hypothesis 2: Older employees' generational stereotypes will predict their assessments of the work skills and competencies of young professionals: the more stereotypically older employees view young professionals' characteristics, the poorer their assessments of young professionals' work skills will be.

An alternative way to learn whether and how generational stereotypes create reverse age interpersonal discrimination in the workplace is to ask employees. Hence, we collected brief stories and examples of workplace experiences with discrimination. Because young employees underreport age discrimination relative to older employees and often attribute negative events to lack of work experience instead (Garstka, Schmitt, Branscombe, & Hummert, 2004), we did not expect to find a large number of reverse age discrimination examples in young professionals' stories. Rather, our main goal with collecting these short stories and examples was to gain a deeper, qualitative understanding of reverse age discrimination (Link 3 in Figure 1).

Method

Participants and Procedures

We e-mailed survey invitations to three groups of potential participants: (a) 500 preregistered participants for the 2012 Nonprofit Summit in a Mid-western state, (b) 800 listserv subscribers of several large nonprofits in the state, and (3c) 200 students registered in the largest Masters of Public Administration program in the state. We obtained 327 responses (21% to 23% response rate from each source), but excluded 45 individuals who had never been employed in the nonprofit and human services sector, leaving 282 participants in our final sample.

Among the 282 participants, 81% were female, 61% held a 4-year college degree, and an additional 32% held a Master's degree or higher. A large number of participants—34%—had 10 or more years of work experience in the nonprofit and human services sector. Thirty percent reported titles such as director, deputy director, president, or vice president; the rest were project managers, coordinators, associates, or counselors. Participants' age ranged from 19 to 60 years or older. Following common breakdowns, we categorized individuals aged 50 years or older as Boomers ($n = 59$, 21%), 30–49 year olds as X-ers ($n = 83$, 29%), and 19–29 year olds as Millennials ($n = 140$, 50%). Boomers and X-ers are considered older adults, whereas Millennials are considered young adults, in the reverse age discrimination literature.

Measures

Our online survey consisted of four sections: demographics (described above), a generational stereotypes scale, a work skills scale, and open-ended questions about workplace experiences with reverse age discrimination.

Generational stereotypes. Following Schein's (1973) methodology for studying gender stereotypes in management and leadership, we developed a Generational Stereotypes Index. First, the first author reviewed 68 published academic articles on generational differences, and recorded 64 adjectives or other descriptors used for Millennials. Next, all four authors reviewed the 64 items, and removed 31 items that were deemed redundant (e.g., "materialistic" was removed but "extrinsically motivated" was kept), rarely mentioned as a Millennial descriptor (e.g., "conventional"), and vague and open to interpretation (e.g., "mediator rather than leader"). As is typical in research in the stereotypes/attributes tradition (e.g., Diekmann & Eagly, 2000), the surviving 33 descriptors were assigned to *a priori* scales, such that items used in a consistently positive way were assigned to a positive stereotypes scale, and vice versa for items used in a consistently negative way. Participants responded to all 33 items using a 5-point rating scale where 1 = *not characteristic* to 5 = *very characteristic*. Survey instructions were modeled after Schein (1973), and asked participants to rate each descriptor according to what they think "young nonprofit professionals" are. Table 1 reports scale alphas; Appendix A shows all items.

Work skills and competencies. We developed an initial list of 26 skills/competencies relevant to the nonprofit sector. To validate the list, we recruited 20 subject matter experts (SMEs): Seven of them had titles at the director level (mean work experience was eight years), and 13 had titles such as coordinator and specialist (mean work experience was four years). SMEs rated each item on the list as follows: 1 = *core work skill: nonprofit professionals must possess this skill to be successful in the sector*, 2 = *general work skill: possessing this skill is helpful to professional success across sectors*, 3 = *personal skill: this skill is*

not relevant to professional success. There was high agreement between the two groups of raters (directors and employees): $\kappa = .76$ ($p < .001$). Of the 26 items, 12 were rated as a “core” skill, 11 were rated as a “general” skill, and three were rated as a “personal” skill and were therefore dropped.

The surviving 23 items were included in the survey. Participants were instructed to check each skill/competency that they believe young nonprofit professionals lack. Hence, a rating of “1” indicates that participants believe young nonprofit professionals lack that skill/competency, and vice versa for a rating of “0.” Scale scores were formed by summing responses across items. Table 1 reports scale alphas; Appendix A shows all items.

Workplace experiences with discrimination. Participants aged 19- to 29-years-old were directed to the question: “Please tell us about any work experience you have had that is mostly explained by your age and/or the assumptions others have made about you because of your age.” Follow-up prompts captured information about specific experiences, such as access to training and development opportunities, and to promotion opportunities. Participants aged 30 years or older were directed to the question: “Please tell us about any work experience with members of the young generation of nonprofit professionals that is mostly explained by their age.” Follow-up prompts asked about younger professionals’ work ethic and professionalism, and perceived training and development needs. Two of the authors identified themes and extracted illustrative text from the comments, reexamining the data together until 100% agreement was reached.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations are presented in Table 1. In our first hypothesis, we expected that older employees will be more likely to apply stereotypical descriptions of Millennials to judgments of “the typical young professional” than young employees. Results from a one-way

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics, Intercorrelations, and Reliabilities

	Mean	SD	Pos.	Neg.	Core skill	General skills	Generation	Sex
Positive stereotypes	3.97	.54	.87					
Negative stereotypes	2.87	.71	-.50**	.91				
Core skills	3.78	2.75	.26	-.29	.72			
General skills	3.06	2.44	-.06	.39**	.27**	.70		
Generational category	1.71	.79	-.38**	.34**	-.26**	.24**	—	
Sex	1.81	.39	.06	-.01	.10	.13	-.06	—

Note. $N = 282$. Generational category was coded 1 = Millennial (29 or younger), 2 = Xer (30–49), and 3 = Boomer (50 or older). Sex was coded 1 = Male and 2 = Female. Internal consistency reliabilities (coefficient alpha) are in boldface on the diagonal.

** $p < .01$.

ANOVA in Table 2 show that Boomers and Xers were less likely to endorse positive descriptors of “young professionals” than Millennials: for the positive stereotypes scale, $M_{\text{Boomers}} = 3.79$ and $M_{\text{Xers}} = 3.77$ versus $M_{\text{Millennials}} = 4.27$, $F(2, 279) = 14.88$, $p < .001$, $d_{\text{Boomers + Xers versus Millennials}} = 1.02$ (95% CI [0.94, 1.11]). Conversely, results show that Boomers and Xers were more likely to endorse negative descriptors of “young professionals” than Millennials: for the negative stereotypes scale, $M_{\text{Boomers}} = 3.01$ and $M_{\text{Xers}} = 3.17$ versus $M_{\text{Millennials}} = 2.47$, $F(2, 279) = 14.83$, $p < .001$, $d_{\text{Boomers + Xers versus Millennials}} = -1.01$ (95% CI [-1.12, -0.90]). These large effect sizes indicate that older adults view “the typical young nonprofit professional” in significantly stereotypical ways, providing clear support for Hypothesis 1.

Table 2 also shows younger and older employees’ ratings of core and general work skills. Higher scores on this scale indicate greater agreement that young nonprofit professionals lack these skills and need additional training in them. The mean rating across the 12 core skills was $M_{\text{Boomers}} = 3.08$ and $M_{\text{Xers}} = 2.46$ versus $M_{\text{Millennials}} = 4.49$, $F(2, 279) = 11.12$, $p < .01$, $d_{\text{Boomers + Xers versus Millennials}} = 0.28$ (95% CI [-0.09, .65]). This unexpected finding shows that young employees are actually significantly more critical of their ability to perform core skills associated with nonprofit jobs, whereas older adults see young professionals as relatively prepared in core job skills. In contrast the mean rating across the 11 general skills was $M_{\text{Boomers}} = 3.85$ and $M_{\text{Xers}} = 3.84$ versus $M_{\text{Millennials}} = 2.52$, $F(2, 279) = 7.56$, $p < .001$, $d_{\text{Boomers + Xers versus Millennials}} = -0.55$ (95% CI [-0.87, -0.23]). These results show that relative to young employees, older employees see young nonprofit professionals as lacking in general skills. Taken together, the results for core and general skills suggest that older employees tend to focus on perceived deficiencies in general areas, such as etiquette and professional soft skills, rather than on deficiencies in core work skills, such as volunteer recruitment and fundraising.

Table 2
Generational Stereotypes and Work Skills

	Millennials	Xers	Boomers	$F(2, 279), p$
Generational stereotypes				
Positive descriptors	4.27 (.47) _a	3.77 (.53) _b	3.79 (.44) _b	14.88**
Negative descriptors	2.47 (.54) _a	3.17 (.75) _b	3.01 (.61) _b	14.83**
Work skills				
Core work skills ¹	4.49 (2.68) _a	2.46 (2.54) _b	3.08 (2.53) _b	11.12**
General work skills ¹	2.52 (2.30) _a	3.84 (2.35) _b	3.85 (2.58) _b	7.56**

Note. $N = 282$ of which 140 Millennials, 83 Xers, and 59 Boomers. Means with different subscripts are statistically significant from each other.

¹ Higher scores on the work skills measure indicate greater agreement that young nonprofit professionals lack that skill/competency and need additional training in it.

** $p < .01$.

In Hypothesis 2, we expected that older adults' generational stereotypes will predict their assessments of the typical young professional's work skills and competencies. We tested this hypothesis with moderated regression. We merged data from Xers and Boomers because their perceptions of young professionals did not differ (see Table 2). We first ran a regression where age (young vs. older adults), generational stereotypes score (centered), and their interaction, predicted ratings of gaps in core work skills and general work skills. Results in Table 3 show that age did not moderate the relationship between generational stereotypes and perceived lack of core work skills ($\beta = .40, p > .05$). In contrast, age did moderate the relationship between generational stereotypes and perceived lack of general work skills, such that this relationship was strong among older adults and nonexistent among young adults ($\beta = .91, p < .05$). To understand whether positive generational stereotypes or negative generational stereotypes, or both, drive these results, we repeated these analyses by using the *a priori* positive and negative generational stereotypes scales as predictors; only the interaction between age and negative generational stereotypes was significant ($\beta = .89, p < .05$). We provide a visual depiction these results—which support Hypothesis 2—in Figure 2. As depicted in the Figure, when older adults strongly agreed with negative generational stereotypes, they perceived the largest deficiencies in general work skills in the typical young nonprofit professional.

Finally, we identified themes in the short stories of workplace experiences we had collected. Among older employees (Xers and Boomers), 60% viewed young professionals stereotypically. There were four themes: Young professionals (1) are too casual and lack basic communication etiquette, (2) feel entitled and have unrealistic expectations, (3) have poor work ethics and fail to take initiative, and (4) are self-centered and disrespectful of their elders. Table 4 shows illustrative examples of each theme. Further, among young employees (Millennials), 28% indicated experiencing reverse age discrimination. This report rate is consistent with prior studies on reverse age discrimination—around 20% in Duncan and Loretto (2004), Kessler et al. (1999), and Snape and Redman (2003), and 36% in Kennedy and Hines (2007). There were five central themes: (1) lack of training and leadership development opportunities, (2) perceptions of incompetence due to looking and/or sounding young, (3) lack of respect for their skills and abilities, (4) belittling comments and “advice,” and (5) justifying the existence of reverse age discrimination. Table 5 shows illustrative examples of each theme.

Discussion

The primary purpose of our study was to explore whether one possible pathway toward the reverse ageism that today's young employees (the Millennials) face, passes through generational stereotypes. Our first key

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Table 3
Results of Hierarchical Moderated Regression Analyses

	Core work skills			General work skills		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Age (1 = Young; 2 = Older)	-.30*	-.30 [±]	-.29 [±]	.33*	.21	.23
Generational stereotypes		-.01	-.39		.32*	-.57
Interaction between age and stereotypes			.40			.91*
<i>F</i> (<i>df</i>)	4.04* (1,281)	1.97 (2,280)	1.48 (3,279)	4.83* (1,281)	4.79* (2,280)	4.54* (3,279)
ΔR^2		.00	.01		.09*	.07*
Age (1 = Young; 2 = Older)	-.30*	-.23	-.23	.33*	.44*	.43*
Positive stereotypes		.13	-.45		.20	-.09
Interaction between age and positive			.59			.30
<i>F</i> (<i>df</i>)	4.04* (1,281)	2.24 (2,280)	1.87 (3,279)	4.83* (1,281)	3.03 [±] (2,280)	2.08 (2,279)
ΔR^2		.01	.03		.03	.03
Age (1 = Young; 2 = Older)	-.30*	-.19	-.19	.33*	.09	.14
Negative stereotypes		-.15	-.17		.32*	-.64
Interaction between age and negative			.02			.89*
<i>F</i> (<i>df</i>)	4.04* (1,281)	2.23 (2,280)	1.45 (3,279)	4.83* (1,281)	3.59* (2,280)	3.93 (3,279)
ΔR^2		.01	.00		.05	.08*

[±] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$.

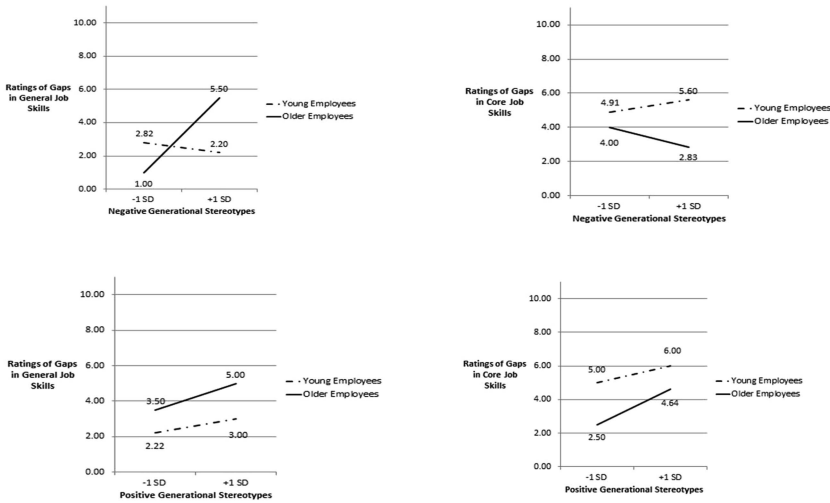


Figure 2. The moderating effect of age on the link between generational stereotypes and assessments of work skills.

finding is that compared with young employees, older employees view young professionals significantly more negatively on common generational descriptors. To illustrate the practical impact of the large effect sizes we obtained ($d_{\text{Positive Descriptors}} = 1.02$ and $d_{\text{Negative Descriptors}} = -1.01$), we used the common language statistic (McGraw & Wong, 1992). This tool revealed that a full 85% of Xers and Boomers will rate “the typical young professional” lower on the positive descriptors and higher on the negative descriptors than the average Millennial. Our second key finding is that age moderated the relationship between endorsements of generational stereotypes and assessments of work skills: Older employees who rated young professionals negatively on the negative generational descriptors, were likely to rate them as lacking in general work skills. In other words, older employees’ reverse-ageist ideologies lead them to also see the work skills of young professionals in negative ways. In fact, two thirds of our Xer and Boomer respondents felt very strongly that young professionals are too casual, need training in communication and etiquette, and act entitled. As illustrated in the words of Participant #337 “Is there a ‘common courtesy’ class? How about a ‘how to use an iron’ class? A ‘how not to drag your feet’ class?” Participant #221 echoed these sentiments: “It is difficult when one comes to you without the basic skills of phone and e-mail etiquette, professional soft skills, etc. . . . Some things it is easier to train on, but those things are not as easy. . .” Such attitudes might be a key reason why young adults are often passed for training opportunities or not entrusted with challenging tasks (Green & Montgomery, 1998).

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Table 4
Older Professionals' Thoughts on Younger Professionals

Themes	Examples
Theme 1: Too casual in language/dress, and lack basic communication etiquette.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They know what their job is, but they don't always represent their agency very well because they aren't really interested in knowing how important it is to have professional soft skills, know how to communicate face to face, or develop partnerships. (321) • Most young people do not come with the skills needed. Accountability and responsibility are the first key elements—then they need to communicate with other people—not by texting but by actually looking someone in the face. (320)
Theme 2: Sense of entitlement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young professionals expect rapid advancement or any experience that will lead—very soon—to another job. (336) • Example—at conference last week [. . .] the speaker mentioned “you know that YP that thinks they know everything about the internet and that therefore they need to be promoted in 2 weeks??” And all the older professionals laughed and nodded their heads. Sense of entitlement DOES exist among YPs and they do feel entitled. Need to get rid of that—older professionals don't like it and it won't help in furthering their career. (255)
Theme 3: Poor work ethics and lack of drive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younger people that I have worked with seemed to not have the same work ethic. Dishonest about work time. Feeling like work supplies belong to them. (253) • Young nonprofit professionals are lacking in work ethic. It is very difficult to find someone who has the follow through needed to maintain a successful organization. Training in “follow through” and “work ethic” would be great, but it is ultimately a behavior change. (252)
Theme 4: Disrespectful of elders and self-centered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older generations, in general, see the opportunity to serve as valuable in itself. Younger adults see what is available that either fits what they know how to do, or what fits into their schedules. (246) • Younger people don't understand that the veterans just want evidence that the new idea has been thought thru. They have seen too many false starts and half-baked ideas. (336)

Indeed, young professionals in our sample discussed having been denied training opportunities available to their older colleagues. For example, Participant #184 said:

[. . .] my boss told me that it would not be possible for me to attend because the cost of the seminar was more than what she thought was reasonable [. . .] A couple months later, I learned that an older employee was going to the seminar, and the organization was paying for it.

Table 5
Workplace Experiences of Young Nonprofit Professionals with Reverse Age Discrimination

Themes	Examples
<p>Theme 1: Lack of training and leadership development opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is DEFINITELY a lot more training for older professionals, such as training in board development and grant writing. Young professionals at my job are not even offered the \$150 it costs to attend the annual Nonprofit Summit. (162) • Many nonprofit training opportunities may not specifically say that they “discriminate” or “prefer” based on age or experience, but generally assume that younger people may not benefit from the program as much as more seasoned people may. (185)
<p>Theme 2: Perceived as incompetent because look/sound young.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people assume [. . .] that I am not the “director” they spoke with via e-mail/phone. I am 27, earned a Master’s 4 years ago, was married 5 years ago, etc. It’s exhausting. (174) • A person in my office told me I looked 16 which doesn’t help to convince the families that I am working with that I am qualified to be doing such work. (180)
<p>Theme 3: Lack of respect for skills and abilities young professionals have.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was brought in as “the 22-year-old who understands the web.” My degree was in news/Internet journalism, and that fascinated the CEO. During our first few months, he would say to whomever we were meeting with “You know, she graduated with a degree in the Internet. Did you even know that existed?” And we’d all have a good laugh. I am working in my field, and loving what I do. But, to them, my “skills” don’t have longevity and will be made obsolete as soon as new media takes over. (181) • Despite of my feelings that I have received a great deal of education and training, sometimes in the workplace many assume that I am not as knowledgeable or capable of tasks, and call on the assistance of older professionals. (167)
<p>Theme 4: Belittling comments and “advice.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was told by one of my previous employers that I should not feel “entitled to move up” to a more challenging position because I had been here for 3 years. I was told this was a trait that Gen Yers have and that I needed to correct my attitude and put in more time. I left that position shortly after that conversation as it was clear the organization was not interested in helping me achieve my career goals. Yes, I am young; however I am very passionate about my nonprofit work and dedicated. Their loss! (161) • I went to a workshop on how to inspire and engage Millennials. They brought in a panel of Millennials to examine, which I found quite hilarious: let us see and inspect these creatures!:-). The panel did not say anything unusual that would warrant this dissection and separation from other professionals. It was so hard to sit there and not shout out my thoughts. (165)

(table continues)

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Table 5. (continued)

Themes	Examples
Theme 5: Reverse age discrimination may exist, but it is often justified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I look around the table and most of the team has been there for 10, 15, 20+ years. I don't know too many people my age that are ever planning to stay somewhere that long. Maybe the reason organizations don't want to invest in training younger staff is that they believe their investment won't stay with them. (171) • When in non-profit, you are more budget conscious. There are not as many opportunities available. Due to this, I have been denied job opportunities to work with in the field. Is this unfair—yes, but I do understand them on their part. (170)

Young professionals also provided examples of being relegated to mundane work. For example, Participant #166 shared: “I was told ‘How could someone as young as you possibly be successful in this job?’” and Participant #161 added:

I was told by one of my previous employers that I should not feel entitled to move up to a more challenging position. I was told this was a trait that Gen Yers have, and I needed to correct my attitude [. . .].

Taken together, our quantitative and qualitative results suggest that rather than being the instigators of office conflict through their irresponsible and disrespectful behavior, Millennials might often be the victim of such. In fact, 60% of human resource managers at large companies said that the office conflict stemming from intergenerational differences they had observed had been caused by older workers' perceptions of young workers' lack of loyalty and respect (Kadlec, 2007). Researchers might also be more likely to view Millennials negatively *a priori*, and to build hypotheses around stereotypes (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Recall that 70% of the academic articles in our literature search hypothesized worse results for members of the new generation. We join in Deal et al. (2010) call to researchers and practitioners alike to be more thoughtful in the hypotheses they pose and the claims they make.

This research makes a contribution to theory by using the generational differences literature to help explain contradictory findings from the age discrimination literature regarding reverse age discrimination. As we previously reviewed, the age discrimination literature has shown that young employees (a) report elevated levels of perceived age discrimination (Kennedy & Hines, 2007; Kessler et al., 1999; Marchiondo et al., 2016; Snape & Redman, 2003); and (b) are more likely to be unemployed than all older age groups (BLS, 2016; Deal et al., 2010), suggesting that reverse age discrimination is real. At the same time, research has also revealed that young adults

(a) put in as many hours at work as prior cohorts (Miller, 2011; FWI, 2005); (b) hold internships at a much higher rate (Howe, 2014a); and (c) are more professional (CPE, 2014) than prior generations. In light of such positive reports regarding young employees' work-related behaviors and attitudes, the existence of reverse age discrimination is puzzling. We believe that our results help resolve this contradiction. That is, our results show that older adults endorse generally negative stereotypes of youth, and more importantly—that they are likely to base assumptions about the work skills of their younger colleagues on negative generational stereotypes. This, we believe, is how the door to engaging in reverse-ageist discriminatory behaviors is opened. Overall, then, the most significant contribution of our research is to highlight that generational stereotypes are a likely enabler of reverse age discrimination.

Our results have several practical implications that apply to the nonprofit and for-profit sector equally. First, as is the case with all other stereotypes, these results point to the importance of ensuring that human resource practices, such as employee recruitment and selection, are as bias-free as possible. For example, relying on objective selection tools, such as cognitive and personality testing, rather than on interviews and other methods where age-related information is very easily accessible, might prevent some instances of reverse ageism. Second, performance management and promotion systems also must be reviewed for biases against younger employees. In addition, managers and leaders must receive training and education designed to help them examine whether their own assumptions about young employees might be influenced by generational stereotypes. Third, we call on HR practitioners to cease the practice of providing “generational differences” seminars and trainings that play to popular misconceptions about the “new” generation. Between the four authors of this article, we have attended a number of workshops where a “Millennial” has been invited to the stage to share with a curious audience who these strange Gen Yers are. Just imagine putting a woman on stage to share who women are, or putting an African American on stage to share who African Americans are, or putting an older employee on stage to share who “Boomers” are. Any of those instances would immediately (and rightfully) be considered offensive and insensitive; yet, it is strangely acceptable for “Millennials” to serve as exhibits in countless workshops designed to “educate” audiences about generational differences. We assert that such trainings do more harm than good as they perpetuate—rather than eradicate—the possibly last stereotype that is still perfectly socially acceptable: the generational stereotype.

Our study is not without limitations. First, we developed the Generational Stereotypes Index to measure generational stereotypes. Though we followed established procedures (e.g., Shein's methodology), this tool must be nevertheless subjected to further validation. Second, though not necessarily a limitation of the study, young adults rated themselves significantly more positively than older

adults on the generational descriptors. Whereas this might be evidence that the young generation possesses an oversized ego, an alternative explanation is that the positive self-ratings serve as a defense mechanism against the barrage of stereotypes young professionals are subjected to. The validity of this alternative explanation is bolstered by the finding that young nonprofit professionals actually rated themselves *lower* on core work skills compared with the ratings they received on those skills from their older colleagues. We believe this suggests that young adults are aware of their limitations, which contradicts (mis)perceptions that they are narcissists. Third, our open-ended questions may have lead participants to tell more negative than more positive stories. However, we point to the fact that not all young adults reported experiences with reverse ageism (only 28% did), as well as that not all older adults reported negative stories involving young colleagues (60% did). Hence, even though our questions may have primed participants, this does not appear to have been a large problem. Finally, we assumed that older adults' perceptions of young employees' work skills are a reasonable proxy for engaging in discriminatory behaviors against young employees. However, we do recognize that attitudes do not always translate into behaviors (see [Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977](#)). Therefore, future research should examine the validity of our findings against behavioral, rather than perceptual, data on reverse age discrimination.

Our study has several important strengths as well. We surveyed a large number of nonprofit employees with various degrees of work experience in the sector. We also made every effort to validate our list of work skills and competencies by using a large group of subject matter experts, also with various degrees of work experience. Finally, we view the collection of brief stories about workplace experiences with reverse age discrimination as another strength because these stories helped shine a more in-depth light on the nature of reverse age discrimination.

Though the topic of generational differences has garnered much attention, empirical research fails to support many of these ideas.⁶ Yet, stories of generational differences remain prevalent. These stories reenforce preexisting reverse-ageist beliefs, which then lead to reverse age discrimination. Reverse-ageist ideologies affect how leaders manage their young employees, including determining what training opportunities young professionals need, and what tasks and

⁶ A reviewer expressed concern that this statement “puts a whole bunch of Millennial researchers out of work.” The focus of this article was on a drawing a link between the acceptance of generational stereotypes on the one hand, and discrimination directed at young employees on the other hand. Hence, a review of the literature that has challenged the validity of the generational differences concept was deemed beyond the scope of this article. However, given the passionate reaction of this reviewer, we suspect that others may express similar concerns. Therefore, we offer a summary of the research evidence on lack of generational differences, as well as a summary of key reasons why the generational differences concept is suspect, in [Appendix B](#).

projects they could be assigned to. Such reverse age discrimination prevents young professionals from learning core work skills needed to grow and excel. In brief, reverse ageism—powered by largely unfounded claims about generational differences—creates a negative work environment for young professionals. Breaking this vicious cycle should be the focus of future scholarship and practice.

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(Appendices follow)

Appendix A

Generational Stereotypes Items and Work Skills Items

	Millennials	Xers	Boomers	<i>F</i> (2, 279), <i>p</i>
Generational Stereotypes:				
Positive Descriptors				
Service-oriented	4.51 (.66) _a	3.77 (1.03) _b	3.89 (.88) _b	9.26**
Civic-minded	4.14 (1.00) _a	3.81 (1.02) _{a,b}	3.55 (1.02) _b	3.02*
Believes capable of making				
positive difference	4.69 (.60) _a	4.33 (.80) _{a,b}	4.24 (.74) _b	4.37*
Seeks variety in his/her work	4.40 (.69) _a	4.11 (.78) _a	4.14 (.79) _a	1.96 ^{ns}
Likes to be challenged	4.34 (.68) _a	3.89 (.78) _a	3.97 (.73) _b	4.71**
Intrinsically motivated				
(values meaning)	4.28 (.85) _a	3.79 (.98) _a	3.86 (.92) _a	3.73*
Seeks good training and				
skills development				
opportunities	4.43 (.76) _a	3.71 (1.08) _a	3.76 (.99) _b	7.59**
Seeks opportunities for				
advancement	4.11 (.69) _a	3.87 (.94) _a	3.76 (.91) _a	1.74 ^{ns}
Dedicated to progress and				
innovation	4.29 (.66) _a	3.78 (.93) _b	4.00 (.65) _{a,b}	4.96**
Team player	4.33 (.88) _a	3.74 (.88) _b	3.52 (.78) _b	9.43**
Life-long learner	4.45 (.55) _a	3.53 (1.01) _b	3.52 (.87) _b	17.21**
Pragmatic and practical	3.66 (.99) _a	2.86 (.93) _b	3.04 (.92) _b	8.31**
Optimist	4.41 (.62) _a	3.82 (.91) _b	3.79 (.77) _b	8.13**
Possesses good networking				
skills	4.07 (.89) _a	3.87 (.87) _a	3.72 (.99) _a	1.31 ^{ns}
Good at multitasking	4.22 (.79) _a	3.41 (.98) _b	3.52 (1.12) _b	9.27**
Celebrates diversity	4.47 (.84) _a	4.28 (.78) _a	4.34 (.67) _a	.65 ^{ns}
Generational stereotypes:				
Negative descriptors				
Gets bored easily	2.86 (1.23) _a	3.69 (1.12) _b	3.34 (1.08) _{a,b}	5.71**
Impatient	2.25 (.81) _a	2.87 (.87) _b	3.21 (.94) _b	11.71**
Unable to delay gratification	2.25 (1.12) _a	3.26 (.87) _b	2.96 (1.35) _{a,b}	4.90**
Constantly needs praise	2.73 (1.03) _a	3.56 (1.12) _b	3.21 (1.11) _{a,b}	6.50**
Generational stereotypes:				
Negative descriptors				
Receives feedback poorly	2.42 (1.03) _a	3.33 (1.21) _b	2.79 (1.11) _b	7.74**
Lacks willingness to pay his/				
her dues	2.14 (.89) _a	3.31 (1.20) _b	2.90 (1.05) _b	13.74**
Lacks respect for others	1.61 (1.02) _a	2.53 (1.31) _b	2.52 (1.18) _b	8.33**
Challenges authority	3.16 (1.16) _a	3.51 (1.06) _a	3.21 (.90) _a	1.39 ^{ns}
Not loyal	1.84 (.95) _a	2.87 (1.28) _b	2.45 (.95) _b	10.27**
Wants no rules	2.45 (.85) _a	3.02 (.87) _b	3.17 (.76) _b	8.07**
Fails to meet expectations	1.70 (.76) _a	2.83 (.99) _b	2.72 (.84) _b	21.15**
Lacks professionalism	2.31 (1.20) _a	3.08 (1.15) _b	2.83 (1.04) _{a,b}	5.42**
Extrinsically motivated	2.26 (1.29) _a	3.30 (1.31) _b	3.48 (.95) _b	6.44**
Self-indulgent	2.86 (1.23) _a	3.36 (1.26) _a	3.17 (1.10) _a	1.85 ^{ns}

(Appendices continue)

Appendix A (continued)

	Millennials	Xers	Boomers	<i>F</i> (2, 279), <i>p</i>
Over-confident	4.00 (.78) _a	3.87 (.76) _a	3.89 (.77) _a	.36 ^{ns}
Wastes time	2.49 (1.01) _a	3.02 (1.18) _a	2.71 (1.12) _a	2.65 ^{ns}
Poor interpersonal communication	2.05 (1.08) _a	2.78 (1.22) _b	2.72 (1.07) _b	5.41 ^{**}
Work skills: Core skills ¹				
Advocacy	.37 (.48) _a	.36 (.48) _a	.25 (.44) _a	1.07 ^{ns}
Board development and governance	.33 (.47) _a	.38 (.49) _a	.32 (.47) _a	.26 ^{ns}
Budgeting/accounting	.24 (.43) _a	.39 (.49) _a	.34 (.48) _a	2.32 ^{ns}
Event planning	.31 (.46) _a	.17 (.38) _{a,b}	.07 (.25) _b	6.41 ^{**}
Fundraising	.45 (.50) _a	.27 (.45) _a	.36 (.49) _a	3.21 [*]
Grant writing	.52 (.50) _a	.44 (.50) _a	.43 (.50) _a	.83 ^{ns}
Work skills: Core skills ¹				
Identifying community needs	.45 (.50) _a	.44 (.50) _a	.36 (.49) _a	.53 ^{ns}
Identifying community resources	.38 (.49) _a	.33 (.47) _a	.32 (.47) _a	.37 ^{ns}
Marketing	.37 (.48) _a	.14 (.35) _b	.18 (.39) _b	6.92 ^{**}
Program development and evaluation	.38 (.49) _a	.36 (.48) _a	.34 (.48) _a	.10 ^{ns}
Understanding funding streams	.26 (.44) _a	.30 (.46) _a	.36 (.49) _a	.83 ^{ns}
Volunteer recruitment	.42 (.50) _a	.23 (.43) _b	.18 (.39) _b	5.96 ^{**}
Work skills: General skills ¹				
Face-to-face communication	.29 (.45) _a	.55 (.50) _b	.32 (.47) _a	6.68 ^{**}
Goal-setting	.26 (.44) _a	.28 (.45) _a	.30 (.46) _a	.11 ^{ns}
Leadership skills	.40 (.49) _a	.34 (.48) _a	.50 (.51) _a	1.34 ^{ns}
Organization skills	.20 (.40) _a	.23 (.43) _a	.27 (.45) _a	.49 ^{ns}
Phone and e-mail etiquette	.13 (.34) _a	.39 (.49) _b	.36 (.49) _b	9.76 ^{**}
Prioritizing	.16 (.37) _a	.28 (.45) _{a,b}	.34 (.48) _b	3.75 [*]
Problem-solving	.17 (.38) _a	.36 (.48) _b	.36 (.49) _b	5.69 ^{**}
Professional soft skills	.23 (.42) _a	.47 (.50) _b	.43 (.50) _b	6.94 ^{**}
Representing an agency	.17 (.38) _a	.30 (.46) _a	.27 (.45) _a	2.36 ^{ns}
Seeing the big picture	.23 (.42) _a	.47 (.50) _b	.66 (.48) _c	16.12 ^{**}
Using social media and website design	.29 (.46) _a	.14 (.35) _{a,b}	.11 (.32) _b	4.71 ^{**}

Note. *N* = 282 of which 140 Millennials, 83 Xers, and 59 Boomers. Means with different subscripts are statistically significant from each other.

¹ Higher scores on the work skills measure indicate greater agreement that young nonprofit professionals lack that skill/competency and need additional training in it.

* *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01.

(Appendices continue)

Appendix B

Research Support for Generational Differences or Lack Thereof

Study	Findings
Reviews of the academic literature on generational differences	
Myers and Sadaghiani (2010)	Qualitative review. Reviewed generational claims from the popular press (e.g., newspaper articles), the popular literature (e.g., trade articles), and the academic literature (e.g., peer-reviewed articles). Found that whereas some differences in communication style exist, conclusions are often over-stated.
DeMeuse and Mlodzik (2010)	Qualitative review. Compared claims about generational differences from the popular press to the findings of peer-reviewed scholarship. Found that only eight out of 26 peer-reviewed studies provided some support for popular claims. Also, no study supported the existence of differences among all four generations present in today's workforce.
Trzesniewski and Donnellan (2010)	Meta-analysis. Used samples of U.S. high school seniors from 1976 to 2006 (total $N = 477,380$). Found little evidence of meaningful change in egotism, self-enhancement, individualism, self-esteem, locus of control, hopelessness, happiness, life satisfaction, loneliness, antisocial behavior, time spent working or watching television, political activity, the importance of religion, and the importance of social status over the last 30 years.
Parry and Urwin (2011)	Qualitative review. Generational differences in work values showed more similarities than differences between generations, and often times—differences that were in the opposite direction to that predicted by common stereotypes.
Costanza et al. (2012)	Meta-analysis. Examined three central work attitudes—job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intentions to quit. The 90% confidence intervals around 15 of the 21 estimated generational differences included zero, indicating nonsignificant differences. Also, no support for the central hypothesis of the generational differences literature that Millennials score lower than Xers and still lower than Boomers on work-related outcomes.

(Appendices continue)

Appendix B (continued)

Study	Findings
Theoretical and methodological challenges in the study of generational differences Theoretical challenge	No convincing theories that explain why generational differences exist have been advanced or validated (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Sackett, 2002).
Theoretical challenge	Objective data on generational differences does not validate the claim that the new generation of workers values work less. For example, this generation (Millennials) actually puts in more hours at work than any prior generation (Staff, Schulenberg, & Bachman, 2010; The Family and Work Institute, 2005).
Methodological challenge	Using cross-sectional rather than longitudinal data. Problem: Comparing a 30-year-old with a 50-year-old today is not the same as comparing a 30-year-old today with a 30-year-old 20 years ago.
Methodological challenge	There is more variability within generations than between generations in terms of demographic, cultural, and psychosocial differences (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Problem: Lumping diverse individuals together in groups simply based on their birth year is artificial.
Methodological challenge	Using self-report data where members of different generations report on their values, preferences, personality traits, and so forth. Problem: Measurement in-equivalence. For example, Meriac, Woehr, and Banister (2010) found that Millennials interpreted a standard work ethics scale differently than Boomers, hence rendering mean-level comparisons between generations meaningless.
Methodological challenge	Not using nationally representative samples. Problem: Conclusions may not generalize to the population at large. For example, the book that introduced the term “millennial”— <i>Millennials Rising</i> —based all its claims on observations of 655 students from Fairfax county, VA, one of the wealthiest counties in the nation (Sackett, 2002).
Methodological challenge	Change is gradual and occurs naturally over time. Problem: Collapsing data into a few artificial averages—most often up to four averages to represent the four generations currently in the workforce—makes it seem as though there are sharp differences between the generations.

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